

Institution: Newcastle University
Unit of Assessment: 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Enriching the world's cultural treasury through research-led poetry translation
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Jones's research-led translations expertly and innovatively communicate Bosnian, Serbian and Dutch poetry to English-reading poetry audiences (including poets) worldwide. His translations enable poets whose reach has previously been limited to single-language areas to expand towards English-reading audiences, thus enriching these audiences' cultural experience and enhancing Bosnian/Serbian/Dutch citizens' pride in their domestic literary heritage.</p> <p>Jones's publications are the recognised English translations of these works. From 2008 to 2013, they have been used in numerous publications and websites as well as stimulating 'onward' translations. His output has served as a catalyst for new events celebrating the poets, poems and cultures that he has worked on. The techniques developed as part of Jones's research also underpin expert-seminar leadership and translator-assessment work. This has influenced other translators' methods and enabled them to communicate poetry more effectively across linguistic barriers to increasingly larger audiences.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Francis Jones's research as (Senior) Lecturer/Reader (1997–date) analyses cognitive, literary, social and political aspects of poetry translation. Findings and conclusions drawn from this research have influenced: (i) Jones' own strategies as a poetry translator, enabling his published translations to impact more powerfully on translated poets and poetry readers; (ii) Jones's seminar and translator-assessment work, thus impacting on other poetry translators' strategies and outputs.</p> <p>Specifically, the research has informed how the discipline considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The norms governing the acceptability of poetry-translating techniques in the 'target' (translating-into) culture – e.g. finding that modern English-language audiences and critics dislike 'archaised' (e.g. medieval) language in modern translations (4). • Translators' real-time decision-making processes – e.g. finding that effective poetry translation requires many revisions, with the focus moving gradually from semantic accuracy to sound quality and target-language effectiveness (1). • The conflict between prioritising the 'source' (original) poem's semantics and its 'poetic texture' (imagery, word-play, sound, rhyme and rhythm) – establishing that translators typically try to convey both, though only 'creative' changes to semantics can convey certain complex poetic messages (1). • The importance of recreating the source poem's voices in translation, especially when voices are structurally or politically crucial – as in Bosnian poet Mak Dizdar's masterwork <i>Stone Sleeper</i>, where debates between medieval heretic voices and the poet's modern voice establish an 'other-thinking but faithful' identity for modern Bosnians (1). • The problem that re-creating source voices might conflict with norms, as when Jones used medieval English in translating <i>Stone Sleeper's</i> heretic voices (5). • How poetry translating happens not in isolation but in networks: e.g. in publication 'teams' (typically comprising source-poet + translator[s] + editor + publisher), or in communities of translators working from one source culture (1, 6). • How poetry translation cannot be culturally or ideologically neutral, because translation teams always represent the source poet or culture in a certain way. This often implies a political stance (e.g. opposing the 'ethno-nationalist' politics that fuelled the 1990s post-Yugoslav wars) (1, 2, 3). The research argues that teams should strive for an ethics of 'allowing otherness' in translations and how they are presented (2). Other findings are that: teams' main allegiances are typically to the source (rather than target) culture; translations may send

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political/cultural signals to both target-culture and source-culture readers; and translations may increase a poet's *source*-country prestige. **(3)**.

The following research findings and conclusions feed particularly strongly into the two ways of delivering impact mentioned above and in Section 5:

- Poetry translators should prioritise recreating the source's underlying intent, voices and texture in an effective target-language poem, even if this is less literal or if it breaches target-culture norms.
- 'Natural' target-language poetic texture is central to translations' success amongst readers.
- Input from others is crucial: source poets, fellow translators and target-language poets, etc.
- Poetry translators should not be afraid to support intercultural and political aims, if these enhance tolerance and understanding, and if translators openly admit to them (e.g. in a Translator's Introduction). This underlies, for instance, Jones's translations in support of a non-ethnicized view of Bosnian society from 1999 to date: Dizdar's *Stone Sleeper* (Section 4) and other works.

3. References to the research

1. Jones, Francis R. (2011) *Poetry Translating as Expert Action: processes, priorities and networks*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [Leading translation-studies publisher; REF2 output: 171016]
2. Jones, Francis R. (2004) Ethics, aesthetics and *décision*: literary translating in the wars of the Yugoslav succession. *Meta* 49/4, 711-728. Available at <http://www.erudit.org/revue/meta/2004/v49/n4/009777ar.pdf>. [Leading peer-reviewed journal; the article was republished in a prestigious 2009 UK translation-studies reader, and in two Bosnian journals.]
3. Jones, Francis R. (2010) Poetry translation, nationalism and the wars of the Yugoslav transition. In *Translation and Violent Conflict*, Moira Inghilleri and Sue-Ann Harding (eds), special issue of *The Translator*, 16 (2): 223-253. [Leading peer-reviewed journal; REF2 output: 162248]
4. Jones, Francis R. & Allan Turner (2004) Archaisation, modernisation and reference in the translation of older texts. *Across Languages and Cultures* 5/2, 159-185. [Highly-respected peer-reviewed journal; can be supplied by HEI on request]
5. Jones, Francis R. (2000) The poet and the ambassador: communicating Mak Dizdar's "Stone Sleeper". *Translation and Literature* 9, 65-87. [Highly-respected peer-reviewed journal; can be supplied by HEI on request]
6. Jones, Francis R. (2009) Embassy networks: translating post-war Bosnian poetry into English. In John Milton and Paul Bandia (eds) *Agents of Translation*, 301-325. Amsterdam: Benjamins. [Leading translation-studies publisher; REF2 output: 138059]

4. Details of the impact

Introduction

The research has generated outputs which have made local cultural heritages accessible to international audiences, have helped to preserve cultural heritage amongst source-language communities, and have enabled others to continue these processes.

- **Jones's translations and commentaries on the works of leading Dutch, Bosnian and Serbian poets.** Jones research has demonstrated the effectiveness of 'creatively faithful' translation strategies that reflect style and underlying image. He implements these in his own translations, e.g. using norm-breaking archaic or dialect voices, and prioritising poetic texture. The effectiveness of this approach has led to Jones being seen as "*among the finest translators*" from Dutch into English (**IMP5**) and "*the leading and most influential translator of poetry from South Slavic languages*" (**IMP1**). The quality of the output ensures wide readership. This affects three main groups. Firstly, English-reading poetry communities (publishers, critics, poets and general readers) gain significant cultural value by reading and hearing new, exciting poetry. Secondly, because English is a global language, this gives source-language (Dutch, Bosnian, Serbian) poets globalized reach, raising their status from 'famous at home' to that of 'key European poet'. Thirdly, for source-language communities at home and in diaspora, seeing 'their' poets internationalized via English strengthens cultural pride.

- **Expert poetry-translation seminars, and feedback to new translators.** These transmit research findings which have two key impacts: (i) they support experienced and novice poetry translators to produce high-quality translations, thereby (ii) assuring the quality of the end product.

Impact via research-informed poetry translation

Jones has published 18 book-length poetry translations from Bosnian, Serbian and Dutch (plus Hungarian and Russian), including four in the REF period. His poetry translations have won 14 awards, including 5 from 2008 to 2013 (Sarajevo International Book Fair 'Publication of the Year' 2008; David Reid Poetry Translation Prize 2nd 2008, 1st 2010; Vondel Translation Prize Runner-up 2008; John Dryden Translation Competition 1st Prize 2013). These translations are a key vehicle for cultural exchange; and impact on English-language readers (but also source- and third-language readers) is considerable: "with [Jones's] translation work, Bosnian culture has gained [...] an ambassador the like of whom it has never had before" (**IMP2**). Crucial to this success is Jones's prioritisation of style, his "creative inventiveness" (**IMP5**), and cultural knowledge, which are informed by his research findings (**IMP1**). Two example poets given global reach by Jones's translations are outlined below:

1. Jones has produced the first book-length English translation of leading Dutch 20th-century poet **Hans Faverey**. Selected poems *Against the Forgetting* (London, Anvil, 1994; expanded edition New York, New Directions, 2004; James Brockway Prize, 2005) put Faverey on the world poetry map. The Editor/Founder of Leon Works literary press states that this "introduc[ed] U.S. readers of poetry [...] to an indisputable visionary of the poetic line" (**IMP3**), inspiring her to commission *Chrysanthemums, Rowers* (Providence RI, Leon Works, 2011; co-tr. Lela Faverey, with introductory essay by Jones). This has exposed the U.S. poetry market to culturally significant texts, in which publishers are not simply consumers but wider enablers of inter-cultural communication. Both of these translations generated further impact, e.g.:
 - (i) A public reading and panel discussion about Faverey at New York Poets House (2012) – with Jones, literary publisher/writer/academic Renee Gladman, leading US critic Eliot Weinberger, New Directions poetry editor Jeffrey Yang, and Poets House Program Director Stephen Motika (**IMP4**). About 30 people attended (a contextually high turnout), including the Netherlands Consul.
 - (ii) Reading Jones's English versions "inspired" (**IMP5**) translators to translate Faverey from Dutch to French (*Poèmes*, tr. Linder and Suchère; Courbevoie: TH.TY, 2012).
 - (iii) The Project for Innovative Poetry (PIP) website, which received over 90,000 visitors between 2000-2011, posted a review of *Against the Forgetting* (2011), drawing the attention of readers with an interest in international poetry (**IMP6**).
 - (iv) A Faverey biography plus translated poem in the promotional work *Dutch Poetry Classics* (2012) by the Dutch Foundation for Literature (DFL), the Netherlands body overseeing literary 'exports'. A review essay (2011) on Faverey in *The Low Countries* (yearbook promoting Dutch arts/culture) cites *Against the Forgetting* (**IMP6**).
2. **Mak Dizdar's** poetry collection *Stone Sleeper* is so central to Bosnian culture that it appears on Bosnia's 10-mark banknote. Jones has produced its only English translation (Sarajevo: DID, 1999; revised edition London: Anvil, 2009), using norm-breaking voice and poetic-texture techniques to reflect Dizdar's poetic pyrotechnics. Jones's techniques emerged from his research, and the resulting work was praised as having "brought this work into [the] treasury of the world's most highly-valued cultural achievements" and "a precious confirmation of [Bosnian] cultural identity" which helped "affirm South-Eastern Europe's cultural plurality" (**IMP2**). Example evidence is:
 - 4.55/5 rating by 77 readers (many with Bosnian names) on the *GoodReads* website; a 2012 review states: "It tells who we [Bosnians] are so we have to keep on reading it over and over again" (**IMP6**).
 - Web/blog reposts of Jones's translations: e.g. a poem from Jones's 2004 research article (Section 3: 2) on the blog *Wonderful Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2008) (**IMP7**).
 - Jones's *Stone Sleeper* was 'translated onward' from English into Urdu (tr. Hamid, Islamabad, National Book Foundation, 2008) (**IMP2**): this secondary impact, on Urdu

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readers, would not have been possible without Jones's version.

- Bosnian philosopher Rusmir Mahmutćehajić used Jones's translations in an English-language essay (2008) and book (2011) on Dizdar which promote a non-ethnicized, multi-faith model of Bosnian society (**IMP8-9**).

Significance and reach: Newcastle research regarding the interplay between norms, semantic faithfulness, stylistic loyalty and cultural-political engagement, therefore, promotes highly effective international communication of poetry. This (i) gives non-English-language poets international prestige, bringing them into a global market; (ii) broadens the cultural experience of native and non-native English readers; and (iii) enables source-language publics to validate their own culture via English translation.

Impact via research-informed translator training

Jones's research also informs advice transmitted directly to other translators, impacting on their translating approaches and subsequently on readers who benefit from their translations.

Specifically, work with poetry translators from Dutch has generated impact through poetry seminars led by Jones at the DFL's 'Literary Translation Days' (Utrecht, 2010) (**IMP5**), and at Brockway Poetry Translation Workshops in which Jones has acted as both leader (Amsterdam, 2005) and participant (Rotterdam, 2013) (**IMP5**).

Jones's research-led internationalisation of poets such as Faverey also inspires interest in poetry translation amongst novice translators and creative writers, generating further training impacts. In 2012, publisher Renee Gladman invited Jones to deliver two events to staff, students and public at the Ivy-League's Brown University. The first was a workshop with around 8 creative writing students; the second was a talk and reading to about 15 staff, students and members of the public on poetry translation (**IMP10**). These types of engagement activities indicate that Newcastle's translation research is generating global interest in innovative poetry-translation methods and greater appreciation for 'international' culture, which can only benefit source poets and cultures. The DFL's translation support work, for example, shows how highly the Dutch government values the globalisation of its literary output via agents such as Jones. This is exemplified in the DFL list, from which all literary translations receiving state funding must choose a translator. Since 1985, Jones has acted as an assessor for this list, providing formative feedback for submissions and helping the DFL to assure the quality of the Netherlands' cultural exports (**IMP3**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (IMP1) Testimonial from Richard Berengarten, a widely-published poet.
- (IMP2) Testimonial from President of the academic network International Forum Bosnia (in the original Bosnian, plus an English translation).
- (IMP3) Testimonial from Editor/Founder of the literary press Leon Works, who is also a US poet, novelist and academic.
- (IMP4) New York Poets House event (2012). Details available at: www.poetshouse.org/programs-and-events/readings-and-conversations/life-and-work-of-hans-faverey.
- (IMP5) Testimonial from Managing Director of the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the organisation that funds and supports Dutch literature at home and abroad.
- (IMP6) Summary of online reviews. Available on request.
- (IMP7) Summary of web/blog reposts of Jones's translations. Available on request.
- (IMP8) Mahmutćehajić, Rusmir (2008) Mak Dizdar: the poet. *Spirit of Bosnia / Duh Bosne* 3/3. Tr. Saba Risaluddin and Francis R. Jones. Available at www.spiritofbosnia.org/volume-3-no-3-2008-july/mak-dizdar-the-poet/, accessed Sep. 2013.
- (IMP9) Mahmutćehajić, Rusmir (2011) *Across The River: On The Poetry of Mak Dizdar*. Tr. Saba Risaluddin, with poetry translations by Francis R. Jones. New York: Fordham University Press.
- (IMP10) Brown University (2012) Week of Events beginning March 13, 2012. Available at brown.edu/about/administration/international-affairs/year-of-china/calendar/week/20120313.